IT LOOKS A LITTLE LIKE A TALISMAN.
WELL, THIS IS TYPICAL OF FATHER BUT THAT'S ABSO-LUTELY NO PRESENT FOR A LITTLE GIRL!

HI!

SHE'S A REAL ANGEL, EVEN THOUGH SHE CRIES A LOT.
MUST BE SO NICE TO HAVE A GIRL.

IT'S ALRIGHT.
IT REMINDS ME OF WHEN JESSICA WAS LITTLE.

I'M SORRY NATSUHI -NEESAN, THIS MUST BE HELL FOR YOUR MIGRAINE ...
ALRIGHT, IT SCARED YOU DIDN'T IT?!

HERE!
A FLOWER FOR ANGE TOO!
MARIA, WHERE DID YOU GET THESE ...
MAMA! FLOWERS!
I'M SORRY NII-SAN...
DON'T WORRY, THOSE ROSES WILL GROW BACK.
HAHAHA!
MAMA, YOU LOOK LIKE A PRINCESS!
OH, THIS GIRL ...
EHEHE!
THAT'S MY LITTLE SISTER!
WOW, YOU ARE SO PRETTY, ANGE!

I AM THE LADY OF THE USHIROMIYA HOUSE!
ONII-CHAN, CAN'T YOU LIVE WITH US FROM NOW ON?
I WANT YOU TO STAY!
I WANT ALL OF US TO BE TOGETHER!

# CHAPTER 25: THE CAGE OF OBLIGATIONS

EVERY ONE—?
IN THE GOLDEN LAND.
I...?
WHERE... AM...
ALL BECAUSE... I JUMPED IN THE CAPITAL OF BOOKS...
YOU WERE IN HORRIBLE SHAPE.
IT TOOK QUITE SOME TIME UNTIL YOU EVEN REMEMBERED THIS FORM—
BEATO ACCIDENTALLY FOUND YOU FLOATING ABOUT IN THE WAVES OF THE OCEAN OF NOTHINGNESS.

ANGE
WE WERE ALL WAITING FOR YOU TO COME BACK!
BECAUSE YOU KEPT WISHING THAT YOU COULD JOIN US ALL HERE
YOU WERE ABLE TO COME HERE

...
ANGE
...
...SO YOU LEARNED ...
THE ONE TRUTH.

YOUR SHITTY CONFESSION ...
IT JUST FLOATED IN! INTO MY MIND THAT HAD BEEN TORN TO SHREDS...
YOU ...
THAT RED FRAGMENT... IT COULDN'T BE...
I SEE ...
FOR YOU OF ALL PEOPLE TO... THE GODDESS OF FATE MUST TRULY HATE ME...
... I DON'T UNDER-STAND ANYTHING ANYMORE!

WHAT AM I SUP-POSED TO BE ABLE TO BELIEVE ...?!
WHAT AM I SUP-POSED TO DE-SPISE ?!

WHAT SHOULD I DO ....??
.....
.....
ANGE -CHAN ...

IF YOU HAVE SEEN IT ALL THEN YOU SHOULD ALREADY UNDER-STAND
THAT SOMETHING FOR YOU TO HATE
YOU HAVE TO HATE ME.
IT IS MY FAULT.
I HAVE TAKEN YOUR FAMILY FROM YOU.
EH
...?

I TOOK YOUR FAMILY FROM YOU ...
AND A CHANCE OF A FUTURE FROM YOUR FAMILY.
.....
IS THIS A JOKE?
DO YOU WANNA TELL ME IT WAS A WITCH AGAIN?
.....
I AM TALKING AS THE HUMAN CULPRIT.
THAT NOBODY HAS TO SIN AS LONG AS THE WITCH IS TO BLAME?!

I WAS THE ONE WHO GAVE RISE TO THAT TRAGEDY.
EVEN IF THE ACTUAL OUTCOME WAS DIFFERENT, I DID KILL THEM ALL.
I HAVE TAKEN ALL THEIR LIVES IN COUNTLESS FRAGMENTS.
THIS RESULT WAS NOTHING MORE THAN ME CORNERING THE ADULTS ...
EVEN WITH THIS OUT-COME ...
I AM STILL AT THE CENTRE OF IT ALL.
INTO A SITUATION THAT LED TO VIOLENCE

DUE TO MY CIRCUM-STANCES ...
THEY ALL LOST THEIR LIVES.
HAD I NEVER CREATED THAT PLAN ...
THIS TRAGEDY WOULD PROBABLY NOT HAVE OCCURRED ...
I THINK
I WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SAVE THEM ALL

EVERY-ONE MUST THINK SO ...
SOMETHING SO DANGEROUS CAN ONLY BECOME A SEED FOR ANGUISH.
BEING THE MASTER OF THAT ROOM ...
I COULD HAVE DESTROYED IT OR THROWN IT ALL INTO THE SEA ...
HAD I REALLY THOUGHT THE WORLD TO BE THAT FLEETING
I WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DIE ALONE
IF I WERE TO DIE...
WOULD HE CRY OVER ME?
NO.
I DON'T WANT ANYBODY ELSE TO HAVE HIM.
I AM SURE HE WOULD CRY AND CRY UNTIL HIS TEARS DRIED
AND ONE DAY
AS IF NOTHING HAD EVER HAPPENED HE WOULD MOVE ON WITH SOME-BODY ELSE

ALL BECAUSE I HAD ABAN-DONED
EVERY CHOICE AND...
EVERY FUTURE.
BUT I DID NOT...
AT THAT TIME I DIDN'T EVEN SEE THAT OPTION.
I DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO SEE IT.
JUST BY THAT NOBODY WOULD HAVE HAD TO DIE IN THE END, RIGHT?

I ALWAYS CONSIDERED HAPPINESS TO BE SOMETHING THAT GOD OR OTHERS BESTOW UPON YOU.
IT'S IRONIC.
ALWAYS THE PASSIVE ONE
IN-DULGING IN SWEET DELU-SIONS
I WAS RUNNING AWAY FROM REALITY AND LIVING A LIE OF HAPPINESS
I RAN ...
AND RAN ...
AND RAN.
AND BECAUSE I KEPT RUNNING, REALITY NEVER CHANGED.

I CHOSE THIS PLACE AS MY FINAL ESCAPE.
LISTEN, ANGE.
IF I HAD LIVED IN THIS BODY ...
I MIGHT HAVE EXPERIENCED UNTOLD HAPPINESS ...
HAD I SEARCHED FOR AN OPTION THAT I WAS UNABLE TO SEE ...
IF I HAD BEEN ABLE TO LIVE IN REALITY ...
HAD I, AT LEAST, TRIED TO HOLD OUT MY HAND WITHOUT FEAR...

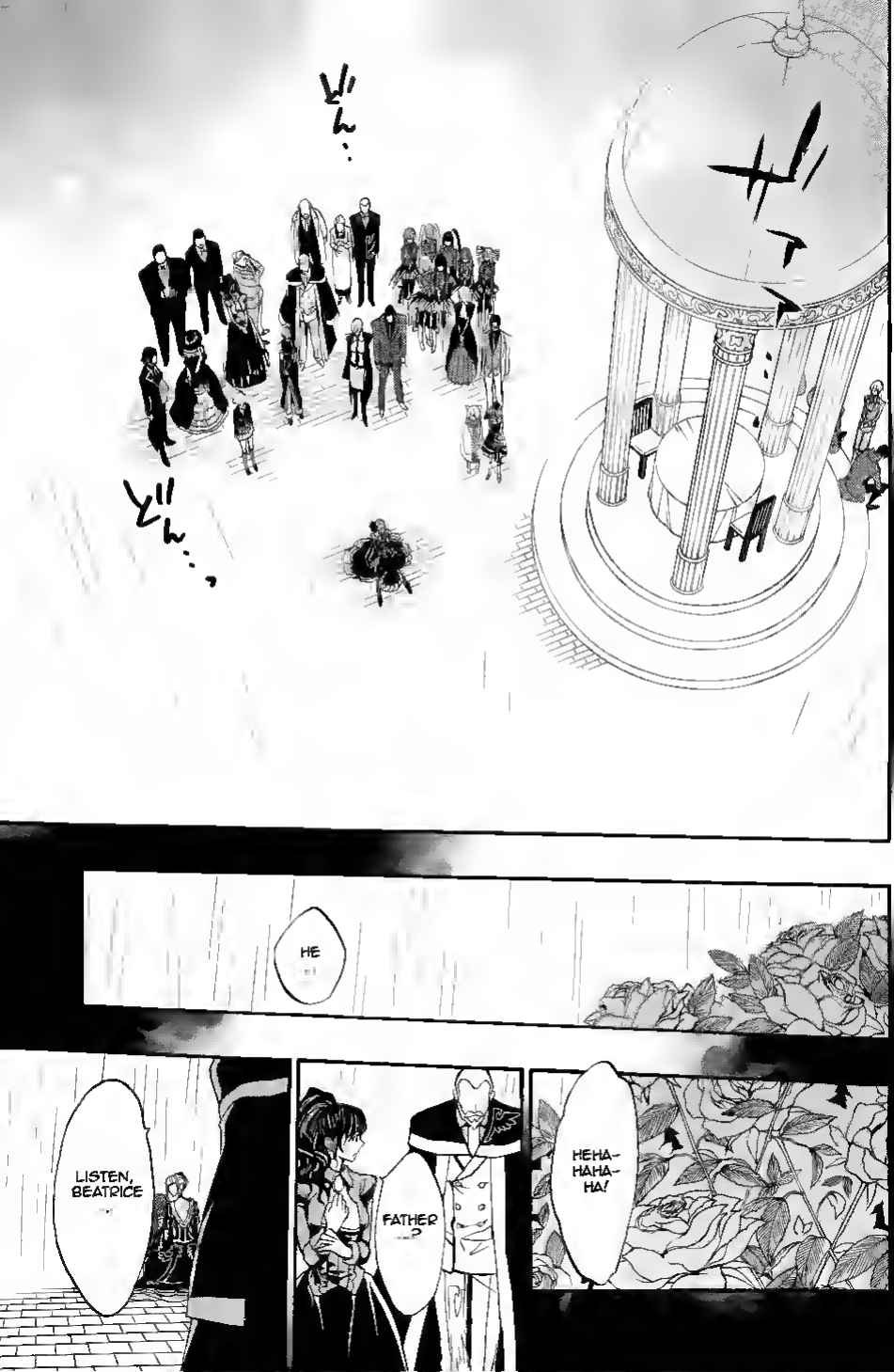
I THINK ...
THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT OUTCOME IN STORE FOR ME...
ONE WHERE I MIGHT HAVE CLUTCHED UNTO IT, IN THAT MOMENT WHERE I WAS ABLE TO THINK THAT LIVING MIGHT NOT BE THAT BAD...
YOU COULD SAY ...
THE POSSIBILITIES WERE ENDLESS ...
BUT BY SIMPLY DOING NOTHING I UNDID THEM ALL.
I SIMPLY LOCKED ...
THE FUTURE OUT.

I CRUSHED THAT POSSIBILITY.
AND IN MY SELFISHNESS I RIPPED ALL OF THEIR FUTURES AWAY WITH IT
AND LOCKED THEM INTO A DEAD END.
YOU SHOULD JUST HATE ME WITHOUT EVER THINKING OF FORGIVING ME
YOU HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO HATE ME TILL THE END OF YOUR DAYS.

I AM SORRY ...
ANGE.

AND YOU TOO ...
MY ONE-WINGED FAMILY.

どん
どんっ
どんっ
どん…
ANGE DON'T BE MEAN TO BEATO
IT'S ALRIGHT, MARIA
IT'S ALRIGHT


HE
HEHA-HAHA-HA!
FATHER?
LISTEN, BEATRICE

I CAN NO LONGER SIT IDLY BY AND WATCH YOU SHOULDER ALL OF THIS.
ALL THESE SINS ARE ROOTED IN THE ERRORS I COMMITTED.
TO REQUEST FORGIVENESS FROM A DEAD PERSON ...
MY SINS HAVE TAKEN ROOT IN THIS FAMILY AND WILL NEVER DISAPPEAR.
IT WAS ME WHO FORCED BEATRICE INTO THAT THORNY DESTINY.
THIS OUTCOME IS THE RESULT OF MY MISTAKES.

KINZO
YOU
IF I HAD BEEN ABLE TO CALL YOU OUT ON YOUR MISTAKES AS A FRIEND AT LEAST...
THAT MIGHT BE SO BUT...
AND I THINK THERE IS A CONSID-ERABLE NUMBER OF PEOPLE THAT AGREE
I SHOULD HAVE INTERVENED, AS THE MOTHER WHO RAISED HER, WHEN SHE STARTED USING IT AS A TOOL TO MAKE UNPLEASANT THINGS DISAPPEAR TO HER...
AND I WAS THE ONE WHO TAUGHT HER ABOUT MAGIC.
I KNEW EVERYTHING, SO I SHOULD HAVE PROTECTED AND GUIDED HER ALONG, EVEN IF THAT HAD VIOLATED MY OATH AS A SERVANT
AND I AM TO BLAME THAT LADY BEATRICE COULD NOT BE SAVED FROM HER CRUEL DESTINY

.....
YOU ...
YOU TOO ...
... YEAH ...
THAT'S RIGHT.
THERE NOT EVEN ROOM FOR EXCUSES
WE'RE SORRY FOR NOT BEING THE PARENTS THAT YOU COULD BE PROUD OF ...
ANGE ...

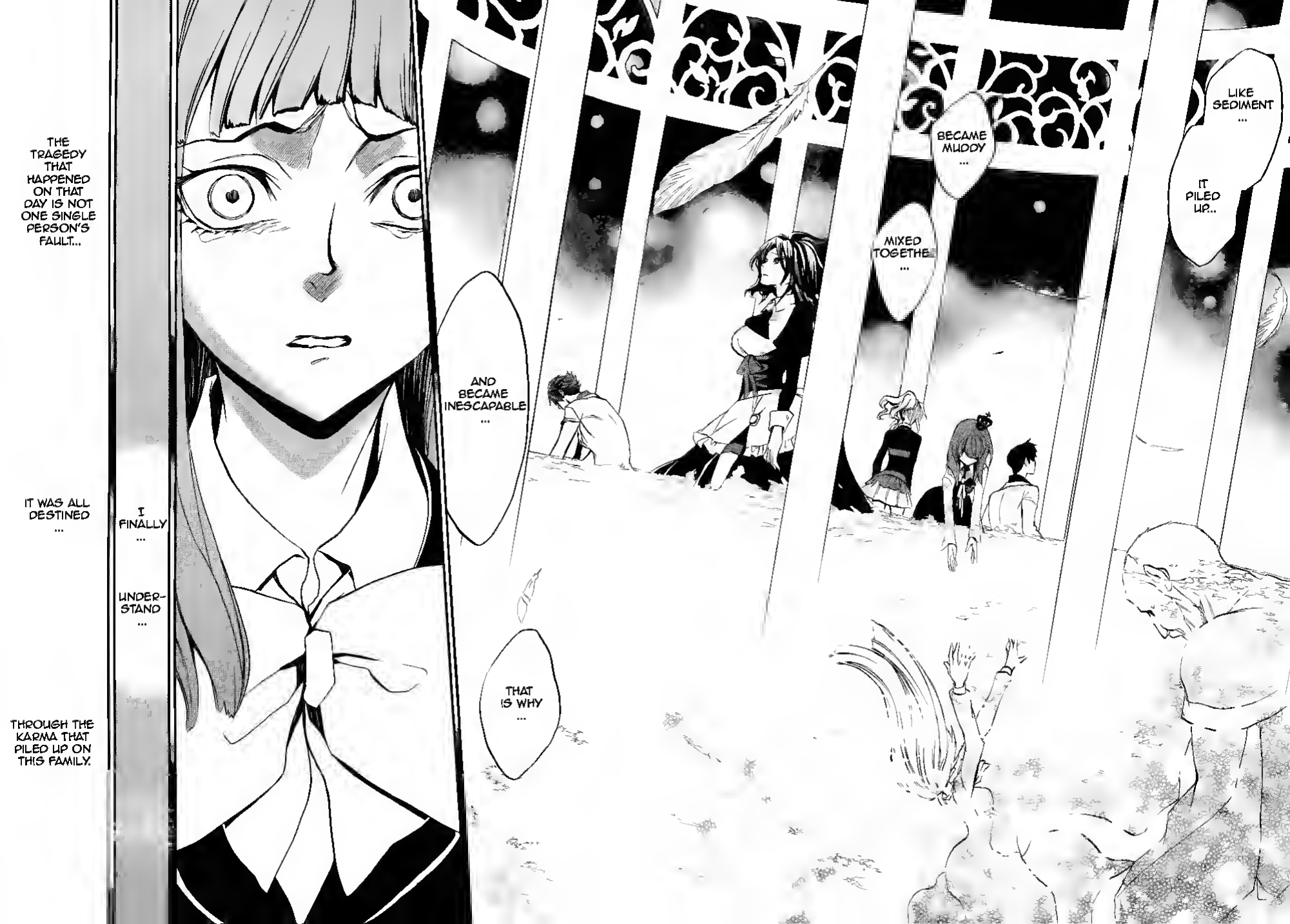
STIRRING THE FLAMES ...
CLUTCHING ON TO MONEY ...
THREATENING ONE ANOTHER ...
CONSTANTLY GOING ON LIKE THIS ...
WAS THE SIN THAT INVITED THIS OUTCOME IN.
WE WERE ALL SUPPOSED TO BE PEOPLE THAT ANGE COULD HAVE BEEN PROUD OF.
BUT IN THAT REGARD WE WERE ALL TOO FAR FROM IT...

NO.
I SHOULD HAVE ACCEPTED YOU MORE.
UH ...
COULD I HAVE GOTTEN ALONG BETTER WITH YOU IF I HAD BEEN A BETTER GIRL?
IF I HAD JUST ..
PAID A LITTLE BIT MORE ATTENTION TO MY GIRLFRIEND ..!
I WAS OFTEN SCARED BY HER EYES THAT SEEMED TO TELL ME SOMETHING ...
BUT I AVERTED MY EYES AND KEPT TALKING ONLY OF DREAMS
IF I HAD JUST BEEN A STRONGER MAN THAT SHE COULD HAVE DEPENDED ON TO EASE HER MIND ..
I MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SAVE HER

AND I...
IF I ...
HAD JUST BEEN A BETTER BEST FRIEND THAT SHANNON COULD HAVE OPENED HER HEART TO ...
BECAUSE I THINK ...
IT WAS DUE TO OUR MANY MISTAKES AND MOMENTS WHEN WE JUST FAILED TO UNDER-STAND...
THAT THIS DAY ENDED IN A DEAD-END.

THROUGH AN ACCU-MULATION ...

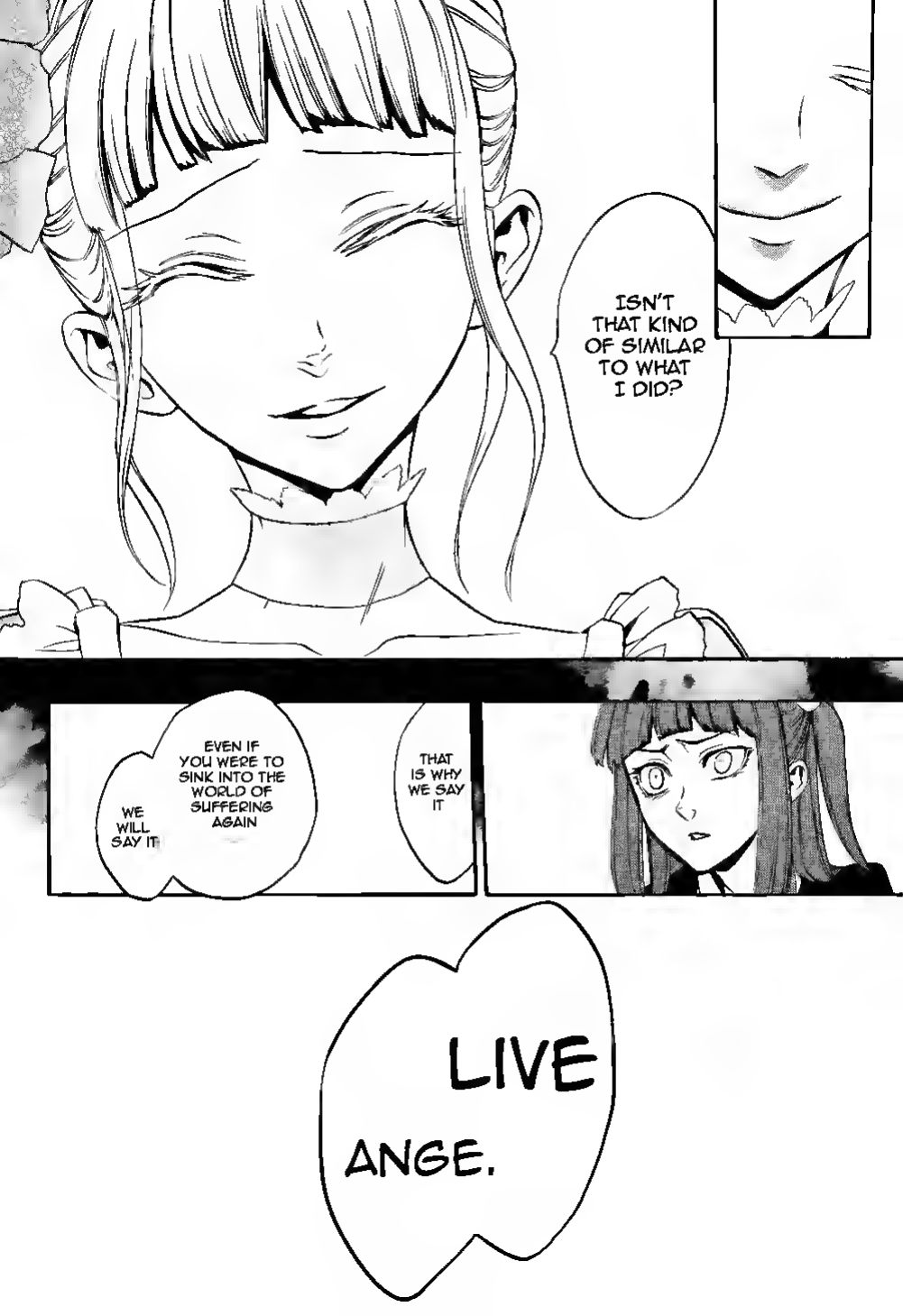
OF SINS.

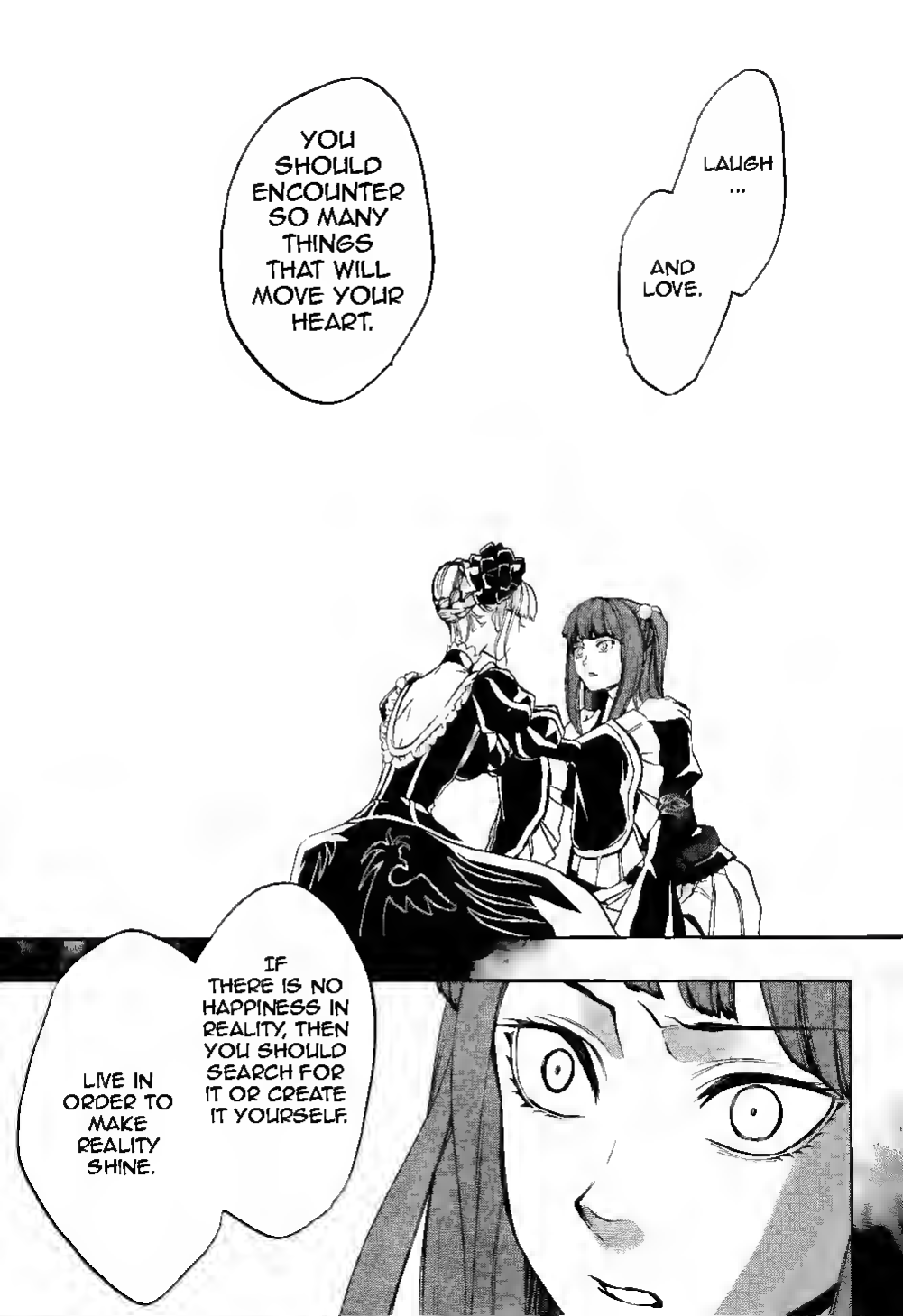

THE TRAGEDY THAT HAPPENED ON THAT DAY IS NOT ONE SINGLE PERSON'S FAULT...
IT WAS ALL DESTINED ...
I FINALLY ...
UNDER-STAND ...
THROUGH THE KARMA THAT PILED UP ON THIS FAMILY.
AND BECAME INESCAPABLE ...
THAT IS WHY ...
MIXED TOGETHE ...
BECAME MUDDY ...
IT PILED UP...
LIKE SEDIMENT ...

IF THEY HAD ALL MADE CHOICES THAT THEY WERE UNABLE TO SEE, AS BEATO SAID ...
AND PRIED AWAY ALL THAT DIRT ...
AND EVEN THOUGH THAT WILL NEVER COME TRUE NOW ...
OR MAYBE EXACTLY BECAUSE OF THAT?
-MY BIG BROTHER
SHOWED ME ALL THESE DREAMS OVER-FLOWING FROM THE CATBOX...
WE MIGHT HAVE ALL HAD A VERY DIFFERENT FUTURE, RIGHT?!

IT IS QUITE CYNICAL THAT IT TOOK YOU TO COME HERE IN ORDER TO NOTICE THAT.
IT WAS BECAUSE SHE MANAGED TO COME HERE.
AND BECAUSE THERE ARE NO TIES BINDING US IN THE GOLDEN LAND ...
WE CAN ALL ADMIT OUR ERRORS AND FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER.

IT WAS ALL TOO DIFFICULT FOR ALL OF US I SUPPOSE
I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO SEE A FUTURE WHERE WE COULD DO THIS WHILE BEING ALIVE.
...ANGE.
IT MUST HAVE BEEN SO HARD TO LIVE THROUGH THESE 12 YEARS ...
THE CHAIN OF MISFORTUNE THAT WE SHOULDERED IS STILL CAUSING YOU PAIN EVEN AFTER 12 YEARS HAVE PASSED
YOU SAID SO, RIGHT ?!
YOU LIVED BY ENTERTAINING SWEET DELUSIONS, LIKE A GHOST
AND THAT YOU DID NOT NEED A FUTURE WHERE NOBODY CAME BACK FOR YOU

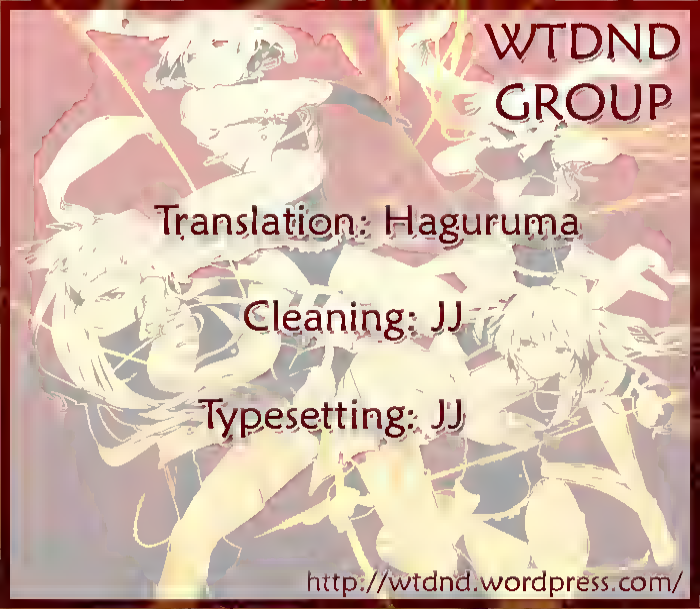

ISN'T THAT KIND OF SIMILAR TO WHAT I DID?
EVEN IF YOU WERE TO SINK INTO THE WORLD OF SUFFERING AGAIN
WE WILL SAY IT
THAT IS WHY WE SAY IT
LIVE
ANGE.


YOU SHOULD ENCOUNTER SO MANY THINGS THAT WILL MOVE YOUR HEART.
LAUGH ...
AND LOVE.
IF THERE IS NO HAPPINESS IN REALITY, THEN YOU SHOULD SEARCH FOR IT OR CREATE IT YOURSELF.
LIVE IN ORDER TO MAKE REALITY SHINE.

AT THE VERY END YOU FACED THE TRUTH ...
HEAD ON.
BECAUSE, THE LAND OF THE DEAD YOU ARRIVE AT WHEN TURNING AND RUNNING FROM REALITY...
HAS NEITHER HAPPINESS NOR FUTURE.

SO LIVE NOW AND GRASP YOUR HAPPI-NESS ...
ANGE.

**Episode8:** *Twilight of the golden witch*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